

# A survey on the current situation of aesthetic education curriculum in middle and primary schools and suggestions for countermeasures

Lei NIE

College of Teacher Education, Southwest University, Chongqing 400716, China

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**Abstract:** The construction of aesthetic education curriculum in middle and primary schools is a necessary measure to promote the comprehensive development of morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor. School education is the main channel for achieving the goal of aesthetic education. However, a survey of middle and primary school teachers from 26 provinces and cities in China reveals that there are still many important problems in the implementation of aesthetic education, including unclear content and value of aesthetic education, lack of content in aesthetic education curriculum, single organizational form, outdated methods, and inadequate supervision system for aesthetic education curriculum, and so on. This research proposes strategies for improvement based on the current situation of aesthetic education curriculum in middle and primary schools.

**Key words:** aesthetic education; aesthetic education curriculum; aesthetic education teachers; current situation of problems; suggestions for countermeasures

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## 1 Introduction

The construction of the aesthetic education curriculum in middle and primary schools is a necessary measure to implement the cultivation of a well-rounded person, and schools are the main channel. In 2015, the State Council issued *Opinions on strengthening and improving school aesthetic education work*, emphasizing the construction of a scientific aesthetic education curriculum system, improving aesthetic education teaching, coordinating and integrating school and social aesthetic education resources, incorporating aesthetic education into the entire talent cultivation process of all levels and types of schools [1].

However, up to now, the implementation of aesthetic education has not been satisfactory. This study distributed questionnaires nationwide to young and mature teachers of middle and primary schools, arts and non-arts subjects, top and weak schools, with a total of 262 valid questionnaires returned. The study has found that there are still obvious problems with the implementation of aesthetic education in middle and primary schools, including ambiguity in the content and value of the aesthetic curriculum, lack of content, single form of organization, backward implementation methods and an inadequate supervision system for aesthetic education resources.

## 2 Curriculum development in aesthetic education: current status and practical dilemmas

### 2.1 The connotations and values of the aesthetic curriculum remain ambiguous

At present, there is a lack of clarity in middle and primary schools as to the essential content of aesthetic education. In addition, basic education is influenced by the "double basic" objective, positioning the core task of teaching as mastering basic knowledge and basic skills, without viewing the essence of aesthetic education from the perspective of "all-round development", which is the fundamental reason for the ineffectiveness of aesthetic education in schools.

The survey shows that over 96.5% of middle and primary school teachers agree that the aesthetic education curriculum refers to the art curriculum, which indicates that most teachers have a narrow understanding of the connotation and extension of the aesthetic education curriculum, and there is no consensus on the relationship between aesthetic education and the curriculum of non-art subjects. 44.4% of teachers believe that the core function of the aesthetic education curriculum is to cultivate students' artistic ability, and over 70% of teachers of subjects other than art agree with this. This view is shared by over 70% of teachers of subjects other than art. Teachers of non-art subjects do not recognize the importance of achieving the aims of aesthetic education in the subjects they teach. Another 15% of teachers consider aesthetic education to be moral education and deny the independence of aesthetic education curriculum objectives.

2.2 Aesthetic education curriculum in middle and primary schools with missing content, single organization and outdated implementation methods

The content of the aesthetic education curriculum relies too heavily on the arts curriculum, with 64.2% of teachers believing that the core content of aesthetic education is the development of artistic skills. In terms of implementation, 90.1% of teachers said that the aesthetic education curriculum in their school was implemented through the arts curriculum, including music and art classes. Only 3% of teachers indicated that the aesthetic education programme in their schools was implemented through non-arts classes. This indicates that the aesthetic education curriculum in middle and primary schools is limited in content and lacks cross-curricular integration. Related research shows that since 2016, the aesthetic education curriculum offered in Beijing at compulsory education level has been dominated by art classes such as music and art, and no other non-art classes have been offered for aesthetic education [2]. In addition to this, the aesthetic education resources of schools are separated from those of society, and schools are disconnected from social forces, with only 20% of teachers indicating that schools implement aesthetic education through out-of-school programs aesthetic education.

2.3 The aesthetic education curriculum assurance system is not effective enough

The fundamental reason for the ineffective reform of aesthetic education lies in the lack of top-level design. Although 60% of schools have school-level deputies or above in charge of aesthetic education, 35% of teachers say their schools have never held an aesthetic education seminar and 28% no more than once. 56% say their schools have not established an online aesthetic education curriculum resource platform. It is evident that the implementation of policies and documents on aesthetic education in middle and primary schools is inadequate.

The survey shows that the quality monitoring of the aesthetic education in middle and primary schools is still dominated by the evaluation of art works or art examination tests, leading to the narrowing of the existing evaluation system of aesthetic education [3]. 40% of the teachers even report that they have never been supervised in their daily teaching. The inadequacy of assessment tools and methods reveals the lack of assessment literacy and awareness among aesthetic teachers. A systematic and effective system for monitoring the quality of aesthetic education has not yet been developed in middle and primary schools, and the tools are not scientific and effective enough.

The team of aesthetic education teachers is not sound. According to the 2022 *Research Report on the Current Situation of Aesthetic Education Teachers in Middle And Primary Schools* released by the School of Arts and Media of Beijing Normal University, there is a shortage of 747,100 teachers of aesthetic education in compulsory education. According to research data from 12 provinces, over 70% of schools lacked full-time teachers for aesthetic education [4].

An analysis on the status of aesthetic education teachers in compulsory education throughout the country published by the China Association for the Promotion of Art Education and the China Economic and Social Data Centre of Tsing Hua University, shows that there is an uneven regional development and a large urban-rural gap [5].

### **3 Optimizing aesthetic education curriculum provision: suggestions for countermeasures**

3.1 Defining the functional content of aesthetic education and revisiting the objectives of the aesthetic education curriculum

The function of aesthetic education must be reconceptualized. Aesthetic education in middle and primary schools is not only about helping students to master basic knowledge, but also about educating them in aesthetic awareness and aesthetic emotions. It should improve students' psychological qualities and abilities, guide them in shaping themselves and stimulate their imagination and creativity.

Zhao Lingli, an expert in aesthetic education, has proposed a "comprehensive aesthetic education" and an "integrated" aesthetic education [6]. We need to anchor the goal of aesthetic education curriculum in the "Great Aesthetic Education" and take "the development of aesthetic literacy as the base, which can directly drive the improvement of humanistic literacy and attach to all aspects of students' quality development [7]. Aesthetic education drives student development and guides the implementation of the aesthetic education curriculum and materials.

3.2 Build an aesthetic education curriculum system and explore implementation paths

Aesthetic education curriculum should be permeated in the curriculum of various disciplines, utilizing the resources and nurturing advantages of multidisciplinary aesthetic education to construct a comprehensive aesthetic education curriculum [8]. Adhering to the development of aesthetic education curriculum with art curriculum as the main carrier and multidisciplinary integration, adhering to lifelong development and building a lifelong aesthetic education curriculum based on individual life development, we insist on the linkage between home, school and society and construct a developmental aesthetic education curriculum aimed at social survival [9].

Aesthetic curriculum requires tripartite cooperation among family, school and society, such as museum education, public art education, family aesthetic education, etc. The authorities concerned should formulate overall plans to guide the development of home-school-community cooperation in aesthetic education towards long-term development.

Modern education technology helps to share the teaching of aesthetic education courses and expand the coverage of aesthetic education resources. Representative examples include the "Bashu Cloud School" of Bashu Middle School in Chongqing and the online education platform of the Middle School Affiliated to Southwest University.

3.3 Multi-partnership to build a guarantee system for aesthetic education curriculum work in middle and primary schools

Implement policy documents and develop an overall plan for the aesthetic education curriculum in middle and primary schools. All regions should establish and improve the joint meeting system for school aesthetic education departments. Education committees and teacher training schools at all levels should strengthen the coordination and leadership of aesthetic education curriculum construction, clarify directions and goals, and establish regional aesthetic education master workshops to lead the development of aesthetic education curriculum in middle and primary schools in the regions.

Build a quality monitoring system for aesthetic education in middle and primary schools. Multiple research efforts will be mobilized and invested in research on the monitoring of the quality of aesthetic education to ensure that the quality of aesthetic education is literacy-oriented and development-oriented, and to develop an aesthetic education quality assessment tool with high reliability and validity. In addition, we will establish a digital model for the assessment of the

quality of aesthetic education, so that the development, revision and implementation of the aesthetic education curriculum can be based on evidence.

The quality of the school aesthetic curriculum will be incorporated into the school work assessment system, a supervision system for the implementation of the aesthetic curriculum will be established, and scientific assessment criteria will be developed in the areas of coordinated planning, funding and team building of the school aesthetic curriculum. At the same time, comprehensive supervision and information communication of responsible persons will be strengthened.

3.4 Implement aesthetic education for teachers, and train a team of teachers who can "teach", "research" and "evaluate" aesthetic education

School aesthetic education research centers are formed in middle and primary schools to coordinate and manage the aesthetic education work in middle and primary schools. By actively conducting headmaster training and continuing education for teachers, organizing special teacher training in aesthetic education or conducting research on the subject, etc, it aims to promote and improve teachers' aesthetic education competence and literacy in a comprehensive manner. The concept of aesthetic teaching and learning will be deepened in the training of teachers at all levels and disciplines, leading teachers of all subjects to integrate the cultivation of students' aesthetic literacy throughout the whole process of classroom teaching. Improve the teacher recruitment and assessment system and increase the weight of aesthetic quality assessment in teacher recruitment examinations and post-service promotion assessments for teachers.

Departments at all levels should organize and equip aesthetic education teaching and research personnel to encourage the declaration and establishment of research on aesthetic education topics.

#### **4 Conclusion**

Aesthetic education in China's primary and middle schools is currently receiving unprecedented attention and showing a positive development. In the face of the existing problems in the current aesthetic education curriculum, it is important to optimize and monitor the multiple dimensions of curriculum design, arrangement, implementation and evaluation, and expand the diversity of subjects involved in the design, development and implementation of the aesthetic education curriculum system, including education administrators, education implementers, education recipients, parents, and so on. The implementation of policies is integrated with monitoring and evaluation. In addition, we will learn from the best teaching models and educational philosophies of developed countries in order to optimize the whole of aesthetic education in primary and middle schools.

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#### **Conflicts of interest**

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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